

THE  
UTILITY OF THE BOOKS,  
AND THE  
EXCELLENCY OF THE PARCHMENTS;

BRING THE SUBSTANCE OF

A S E R M O N  
DELIVERED AT PROVIDENCE CHAPEL,

*On Wednesday, March 9, 1796;*

THE DAY APPOINTED BY GOVERNMENT FOR  
PUBLIC FASTING AND PRAYER;

*By WILLIAM HUNTINGTON, S.S.*  
MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL  
AT PROVIDENCE CHAPEL, LITTLE TITCHFIELD-STREET,  
AND AT MONKWELL-STREET MEETING.

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*Published by Request.*

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Wherefore it is said in the book of the wars of the Lord, what he did in the  
red sea, and in the brooks of Arnon. NUMBERS xxi. 14.

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L O N D O N :

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THE  
UTILITY OF THE BOOKS,  
AND THE  
EXCELLENCY OF THE PARCHMENTS.

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*And the Books, but especially the Parchments.*

2 TIM. iv. 13.

THE apostle at this time was a prisoner at Rome, in the happy enjoyment of a good conscience, and in daily expectation of martyrdom; his race was almost run, the fight of faith was nearly finished; and the last enemy, death, was coming forth, and Paul knew *that there is no discharge in that war.*

He was now grown old; *the certain young man called Saul*, at whose feet the executioners of Stephen laid down their clothes, was now *Paul the aged*. He had long died daily; life by his ministry had worked in others, but death in him; his outward man had been some time decaying, and his inner man had been renewing day by day.

Paul had been once in the third heaven, where he had seen the prize he ran for, and the crown for which he fought, so that he knew *there was no uncertainty in his race, nor beating the air in his warfare.*

But, though his tabernacle at this time was tottering, and a run of years had almost run it out, yet this *corrupt thing*, which is forbid by the law, was to be offered in sacrifice, upon the service, and for confirmation, of the faith of the saints. Paul had given one answer before the emperor Nero, at which time every companion in travail forlook him, not one yoke-fellow stood with him; but at the flight of the soldiers the captain of our salvation stepped forth, as the person principally concerned in Paul's cause. *The Lord stood with me, and strengthened me, that by me the preaching might be fully known.* It should seem that the trial was long, and that many questions were asked, and wonderful answers were given; so that the court of judicature became a chapel, the senate heard the gospel of salvation from a prisoner in chains at the bar, and both the senate and the spectators, instead of a sermon, heard the gospel by way of dialogue. The emperor asked the questions, and Paul gave the answers; the first brought forth his strong reasons, and the other answered them in the power of the king of Jacob. Nero tried Paul, and Paul tried him; he condemned Paul, and Paul condemned him; he brought Paul to death, and Paul's ministry was a savour of death unto death to him; and so they killed each other, Nero killed his body, and that was all he could do; but Paul killed him both body and soul.

These dialogue discourses the Lord was pleased to own and bless; Paul's *bonds were manifest in all*  
*the*



*the palace*; yea, as the Lord stood by him, and strengthened him, so he likewise discharged his arrows of conviction at many in the court from the bow of Paul's tongue. He suffered Paul to preach at the bar, that the Lord might summon many, by Paul's answers, to the bar of equity; so that a deal of business was done both in the court of judicature and in the court of conscience: hence we read of saints appearing even in the palace; *all the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Cesar's household.*

Paul's first answer had been given, and he was now looking for a second hearing; and after that he expected his discharge from labour, and his dismissal from the stage of time, and therefore he exhorts Timothy, the next in command, *to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, to fight the good fight of faith, and to lay hold on eternal life.*

He forewarns him of perilous times, and erroneous preachers and professors, when men should appear to be lovers of themselves, and enemies to sound doctrine. He counsels him to do the work of an evangelist, not that of a minister of the letter, nor that of an external reformer, but the work that is peculiar to *a minister of the Spirit*, who aims at and enforces *regeneration*, and an inward *renewing by the Holy Ghost*; from which inward change of heart, and indwelling of the Spirit of God, proceeds every good word and good work, such persons *being created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.* He

persuades him *to make full proof of his ministry*; to let fly and discharge *the whole council of God*, in its own force, power, and naked simplicity; and that with solemn appeals both to God and conscience; and to front it and back it, preface it and sequel it, with all prayer, and then to watch the event and effects of it, and so to make a discovery of the full force, power, and proof of it; upon sight of which he would be encouraged and emboldened to be faithful in it, seeing and knowing it to be *the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth*.

He informs him also of the different stations of his yoke-fellows: Demas had fell in love with this world, and left him; Crescens was gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia; and none was with him but Luke. He desires Timothy to bring Mark with him, who was profitable for the ministry. This seems to me to be the same Mark that fled from the work at Pamphilia, and whom Paul would not take with him; and on whose account Paul and Barnabas, the two great champions, parted asunder, and each of them took a young ensign with them; Paul took Timothy, and Barnabas took Mark.

Mark seems to have been one that was apt to faint, and yet pursued again when he recovered strength; and, though his faith was too feeble to go over the brook Besor, yet his heart was so honest that *he was determined to abide by the stuff*; and now, being a little more inured to the hardships of the field, he is found to be profitable for the ministry, when all pro-  
fiting

sisting by Paul's personal ministry was about to be lost; so that, upon the whole, it appears that Mark had grown in grace, and had increased in strength.

Timothy is desired to use all diligence and come quickly to him, who at this time was the ordained and established pastor of the church at Ephesus; near to which it seems was a place called Troas, where a favourite host of Paul's resided, named Carpus, with whom, at his last departure from thence, Paul left all his personal effects, except what he took with him. This was acting according to his own doctrine; *No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life.* His journey to Rome might appear to him to expose him and his property to some danger; wherefore he leaves the principal and most weighty things of all his treasure with his host, which consist of three things, his cloak, the books, and the parchments.

The parchments, like Rachel, in Jacob's *two bands*, are placed hindermost, and a very jealous eye is cast upon them; *Bring the books, but especially the parchments.* We know Paul *had suffered the loss of all things*, and therefore he cannot be thought to die in possession of much earthly treasure. I have at times thought I would give the whole world, if it was mine, to be an heir of all Paul's grace and knowledge, though I should not choose to have given five pounds to have been his heir at law; for in his deepest need the church at Philippi supplied his wants, and sent it by Epaphroditus. One Onesiphorus



found him at Rome, and supplied him, and was not ashamed of his chain, for whom he puts up a most hearty prayer, that he may find mercy of the Lord in the great day, agreeable to the Lord's own promise, *I was an hungry, and ye gave me meat, thirsty, and ye gave me drink, in prison, and ye visited me;* from all which we may conclude that Paul left but little of this world's riches by will.

It is certain that Paul knew nothing of us, and yet we are found among his residuary legatees. What became of his cloak I know not; but I reckon that his dear son Timothy got that, for who should have Elijah's mantle but his successor Elisha? And, as for the *books* and the *parchments*, I believe they are both in our possession to this day, and I hope that they ever will.

Now for the words of my text.

*And the books, but especially the parchments.* From which words I shall consider four things.

- I. What I understand by the *books*.
- II. What by the *parchments*. And
- III. Why this special charge is given concerning them. And

IV. I shall bring some things, both from the books and the parchments, suitable to the present occasion.

First, the *books*. By the books I understand the five books of Moses, and the books of all the prophets, to which he compared his own conversion to the faith, and his own call to the ministry; together with his commission to the apostolic office, which was to proclaim the predicted salvation of the



Gentile world, to which his commission reached, and to which it was chiefly confined.

The first book of Moses, called Genesis, contains a prediction of this great apostle's work. *The Lord shall persuade or enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem.* This was the first hint dropped of the salvation of us, after the destruction of the old world, and the discriminating clemency of heaven had appeared to Noah and his family in the ark. Japheth was the father of the Gentiles; *by him was the islands of the Gentiles overspread.* To persuade, is to work faith in the heart; to enlarge, is to disentangle, unyoke, release, and bring forth from confinement, those that are shut up under a broken law, in unbelief and in the strong holds of sin and satan, and barred out, and kept at a distance from the favour, countenance, presence, and all communion and fellowship with God. *To dwell in the tents of Shem,* is to have the *curtains* of divine favour spread over us, the *cords* of everlasting love stretched out to us, and the *stakes*, the chosen pillars of truth, the elect among the Gentiles, raised up.

He produces from the books the prophecy of Moses, another prophecy on this head. *They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God. They have provoked me to anger with their vanities; and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people, I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.* The prophecies of Hosea and Isaiah are both produced in proof of this, and the apostle by these  
saw

saw that himself being raised up, commissioned and sent to the Gentiles, was an accomplishment of the prophecies and promises made to us.

By the books the apostle squared all his work in the Lord. *He testified both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come, that Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.*

From the books he took his words and phrases. *And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God; for I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power, that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.*

The books were Paul's rule, line, and plummet, by which he tried all his labour, as a wise master builder; and, if any thing was required of him which he had not God's judgment or sentence upon, he informs us of it, and tells us that he gave it as his own private judgment. *This speak I, not the Lord: but I speak this by permission, not of commandment. And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord.*

Paul's experience, judgment, faith, ministry, doctrine, discipline, worship, life, walk, and conversation,

versation, were all tried by the books; his judgment of things was laid to the line, and the righteousness that he preached to the plummet.

*He compared spiritual things with spiritual; spiritual predictions with spiritual accomplishments; spiritual promises with spiritual fulfilments; spiritual works on the heart with spiritual words in the books; and here he saw mercy and truth going before in all the promises, and faithfulness and love following after to make them good.*

From the books Paul takes all the legal sacrifices, feasts, and other observances of the Jews; the types, figures, and shadows, under the former dispensation; the tabernacle, and the mysteries of it. The covenant made with them, and all the vessels and things belonging to the sanctuary service, are brought forth, and, under the operations of the Holy Spirit, they are distilled by our great apostle, and drawn forth, and handed down, in all their pure, spiritual, and evangelical sense and meaning; and Christ, in his great undertaking and finished work, is set forth before us as the end to which they all pointed, the substance which they all shadowed out, and the great antitype which they all typified: hence Christ is called our altar, great high priest, sacrifice, atonement, and passover offering, who suffered without the gate, rose from the dead, ascended on high, and entered the holy of holies, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

From the books the apostle traces faith, from  
Abel



Abel down throughout the antediluvian world, the patriarchal age, and mosaic economy, till time failed him in pursuing the spiritual genealogy of the heavenly fraternity. He tells us what their faith was, and what their faith did: First what it was; *It was the substance of things hoped for.* They hoped for the appearance of the Messiah, redemption by him, and glory through him; and Christ dwelling in their hearts by faith, who is king of grace and king of glory, was the substance of all that they hoped for and expected. And their faith *was the evidence of things not seen.* They saw not the Messiah in his incarnate state, nor the prophecies and promises fulfilled by him, nor the way into the holy of holies consecrated through the vail of his flesh, nor he in his glorified humanity, made higher than the heavens: yet their faith was the confidence of these things, and in confidence their strength stood; by the eye of faith they saw the promise at a distance, and by charity they embraced the promised seed; and, as they lived, *so these all died in faith;* the eyes of their bodies were closed in confidence, and their souls awaked in open and endless vision. *They left their flesh to rest in hope,* and their souls are called *the spirits of just men made perfect.*

These obtained a good report through faith; their testimony stood in their confidence. This was the end of their faith, and the end of their conversation; and, through their faith and patience upon earth, they



they now inherit the promised glory that is in heaven.

By the books Paul got at the true account of the creation and generation of the world; whereby he traces all things up to the first cause, the triune parent of all, and the all-wise disposer of all events. He never found in all the books any thing like the eternity of the earth, as deists dream, and fools believe. Paul doth not make God a reformer or a reviser, but the Maker and Creator of all things. *By faith we understand that the world was framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of the things which do appear.*

We are well informed who founded the earth, and who spread out the heavens; and how the one is to be dissolved, and the other wrapped up at last, *when the mystery of God shall be finished, and the measure of iniquity filled.*

From the books Paul gathers the account of the ancient counsels, covenants, and settlements, of eternity. The heavenly Father's counsel and will of purpose; his absolute choice of the virgin Mary's seed to be assumed in her womb in the fulness of time by the *divine word*, and to be made by eternal union, one with him; of the Saviour's agreeing to take part of the children's flesh and blood; of the Father's love to us, and choice of us in him; of his giving him to us, and we to him; of the life he gave us in him, and of our predestination to adoption to his image, to life and glory in him, and  
of

of bringing us to the external enjoyment of it by him.

He shews from the books the prophecies and promises that went before, and the accomplishment of both by the appearance of Christ, and the glory that should follow his appearance, both to Jews and Gentiles. The rejection of the Jews for their unbelief, and the salvation of the Gentiles upon it; the restoration of all the tribes, and the Gentiles' fulness with them; the universal reign of Christ; his second appearance at the world's end; the resurrection of the just at it; the new heaven and the new earth; the glorious *rest* that remains to the people of God; the keeping of the great Sabbath in the thousand years' reign; the resurrection of the wicked, and their final judgment, at the close of it; together with the delivery up of the kingdom of grace to the Father, that the kingdom of ultimate glory may take place; which, in the fulfilment and blessed enjoyment, is all that heart can hope, or hope expect.

From the books we learn the creation of angels by Christ, and the decree made known to them, *that, when the first begotten was to be brought into the world, (in human nature) all the angels of God were to worship him.*

But some resisted this their Maker's will, and in this matter despised the very race of human beings, and rebelled against that divine revelation, or that decree declared, and *so abode not in the truth*, for which

which they *were charged with folly*, and banished from their own habitations, from the mansions of bliss; to which folly (out of revenge) they add that of *the great transgression*, by endeavouring to counteract the will of God in every thing relative to our salvation. They beguiled Eve, and seduced Adam by her means, and *so brought sin into the world, and death by sin*; by which they have usurped kingly dominion over the children of men, *in whom we have all had our conversation in times past.*

The books shew us the destruction of Satan and his works by the death of Christ; how *Satan's head was broken* by the Saviour's *bruised heel*; the judgment of angels at the last day by Christ the Judge, and by the verdict of every preacher, and by the testimony of all the saints; and the books conclude with the eternal banishment, imprisonment, and punishment, of Satan, and all his angelic legions, and of all the human miriads that have favoured and supported his cursed interest, and who have died in alliance with him.

But again, besides these sacred books of the holy scriptures, we may see that, as Paul's work lay amongst the heathen, and his enemies were always plotting against him, if he could pick up any book of theirs which in any sense made for his purpose, he chose to make use of it. The Athenians seem to have been determined to engross all the gods, and their affections, to themselves; and, fearing lest there should be any god which they knew not, they  
determined



determined not to provoke him to jealousy, and therefore dedicated one altar to him, if there should happen to be such a being in this world, or elsewhere; and, having thus secured themselves from the anger or jealousy of every god, as they hoped; it appears that they made a law to punish either with death, or something capital, any person that should declare or proclaim any strange god among them; and by this law it should seem they apprehended Paul, when he preached the death and resurrection of Jesus; for *certain philosophers of the epicureans and stoics encountered him; and some said, What will this babler say? Other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods, because he preached to them Jesus, and the resurrection. And they took him, and brought him to Mars-hill, saying, May we know what this new doctrine whereof thou speakest is? for thou bringest strange things to our ears; we would know, therefore, what these things mean.* Paul seems to have some knowledge of this law, and makes good use of what he knew of it. He informs them that *they could not lay such a thing to him, nor support such a charge; for as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I saw an altar with this inscription, To the unknown God. Whom ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.* Now, as there most certainly was such a God, and whom they acknowledged to be an unknown one, and had dedicated an altar to him, Paul applies the inscription of the altar to their ignorance in worship, and declares in his doctrine that God which they confessed



confessed they knew nothing of, and so worked himself out of that clause of their act, and out of the hands of his accusers: in all which we may see *the wisdom of the serpent, and the harmlessness of the dove.*

Again, Paul handles another of their books against them. *God, that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands, neither is worshipped with men's hands as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things, and hath made of one blood all nations of men, for in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, for we are his offspring; forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, and silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.*

Once more, Paul quotes a passage out of a Cretian poet against these; *one of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies;* in which he represents their national sin to be that of lying, their dispositions to be savage and brutal, and that their hands were slow to labour, and their bellies as slow, dead, and heavy, being indulged in gluttony and excess; and declares *this witness to be true, and bids Titus rebuke them sharply, that they may be found in the faith.* I shall now dismiss the books, and the use Paul made of them, and treat

II. Of the *parchments*; by which I understand, 1st. The gospel written by Luke. This pious man soon found the apostle out after his conversion to the faith, and continued with him to the last, and was the only person that was now with him at Rome. He styles him *the beloved physician*; and, for the gospel which he had written, *he owns that his praise was in all the churches*; and it is thought by some that, whenever Paul mentions *according to my gospel*, the gospel by Luke is intended, or referred to. This man was a beautiful penman; his style is elegant, and his strokes noble; and he seems to have been a man of eminence, and some note in the world, which appears by the dedication of his works to some great personage, as governor of some province, whom he addresses in his high office, *Most excellent Theophilus*.

2dly. By the *parchments* I understand the Acts of the Apostles, of which Luke was the penman; and it seems as if he was both an eye and an ear witness of the signs, wonders, and mighty deeds, of which that parchment is a narrative and faithful history.

Luke, I believe, accompanied Paul in his voyage to Rome, suffered shipwreck with him, and seems to be appointed of God to be Paul's observer and scribe, as Baruch was to Jeremiah; he was a particular observer of the good hand and handy-works of the Lord, and what he saw he penned; and so handed down to posterity the mighty acts, terrible

rible majesty, and the loving-kindness, of the Lord.

3dly. The *parchments* also might contain the decree and appointment of the apostles and elders assembled at Jerusalem about circumcision and keeping the whole law in order to obtain salvation, with which advocates for the law Paul had no small contention and disputation, till the matter was settled by the whole synod of the apostles at Jerusalem, which Paul delivered to every church that he visited. *And as they went through the cities they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem.*

4thly. The *parchments*, no doubt, contained exact copies of all the epistles which God, by his apostle, had sent to the churches; to the church at Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Colosse, Philippi, Ephesus, to Thessalonica, and to the Hebrews. *Paul was not ignorant of Satan's devices*; he knew that the devil ever had been, and still was, God's *ape* as well as God's *enemy*; that in the prophetic age he had sent forth *false prophets*, and, during the time of the Levitical priesthood, he had furnished the world with *false priests*; priests of Baal, and priests of Jupiter, and priests of nobody knows what. In Paul's days, when apostles, the highest officers that ever appeared, were sent out, *false apostles* were sent out by Satan also. In this age *Satan transformed himself into an angel of light, and the ministers of Satan were transformed as the ministers of righteousness.* In the future ages the apostles knew

that ordinary teachers would succeed the extraordinary apostles, and *that false teachers would be found among them*, as false apostles were among these; and therefore, in order to forestall the devil's market, and to bring his infernal monopoly to nothing, to prevent the quackery of the devil's agents, and the circulation of their spurious medicines, Paul keeps exact copies of all his *epistles*, written verbatim on *vellum*.

5thly. And, if the gospel of Matthew and Mark were now written, as most probably they were, though the gospel of John I believe was not, it is most likely that Paul had secured them; for, if he perused the heathen poets, it is not likely that he would let these escape his library. Peter was well acquainted with Paul's epistles, and no doubt but Paul had procured the gospels both of Matthew and Mark, and perhaps the epistles of all the other apostles extant at that time: and the apostle being now come to a point, *he had long been in a straight betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better*; yet the love of the churches held him by the skirts, and made him confess *that to abide in the flesh was better for them*. And, though formerly he had been undetermined, *which I shall choose I wot not*, yet now he appears to have come to a determination, and chooses to depart, and therefore wishes to set his house in order; and, like an affectionate father who had laid up for the children, he gets his matters and effects together, which were



out in the world ; all his property seems to be with him, except his *cloak*, the *books*, and the *parchments*.

The *cloak*, I am inclined to think, was given to Timothy ; the *books* were distributed to his fellow-labourers, whom he enjoins to *speake the same things* that he had spoken ; the *parchments* seem to have been bequeathed to all the Gentile churches ; and, as to the rest of his property, I believe that was nothing to nobody ; which leads me

III. To consider the excellency of the *parchments*, or why such an especial charge is given concerning them. Bring the *books*, but especially the *parchments*. Now the apostle well knew that the *books* were greatly spread abroad in the world ; they were in the royal library at Alexandria in Egypt, and in whatever city any number of the Jews were settled, and a synagogue of theirs was erected, that there the *books* were kept, for *Moses of old time had in every city them that preached him* ; but the *parchments* were not so universally spread, and therefore the apostle concluded in his own mind that the devil himself could never destroy the *books*, but he chose to guard against all danger that might befall the *parchments*.

Besides, 2dly. The *books* were now in one sense out of date, and some of the contents of them, especially those that contain the covenant of works, were waxed old, and were just ready to vanish away ; for, when he saith a new covenant, he hath made the first old. Hebrews viii. 13. But the *parchments* were

in their infant state, or state of minority at least, and not quite completed, as the gospel by John, and the *book of the Revelation*, seem not as yet to be brought forth; so that, like a tender father, who often takes the greatest care of his little ones, Paul, having neither wife nor children in the flesh, employs his mind and care about the things which, of all things beneath the sun, were the nearest to his heart, that is, the *church of God*, and the *parchments*.

3dly. The Jews, wherever they were scattered, whether they were religious or irreligious, were universal admirers of the *books*; but were the greatest enemies under heaven to the *parchments*. He knew that, like Herod, they would use their utmost endeavours against this young child; and, as they *had killed the Lord Jesus*, and some of his *apostles*, and aimed at the destruction of all the rest, it was not likely that the *parchments* should escape, if they should fall into their hands; for, if they excommunicated and cursed the followers of the Lamb, and forbad the preaching of his gospel, no doubt but they would blot out the contents of the *parchments* from under heaven.

4thly. The *books*, it is true, contain all the prophecies and promises of things to come, and what the Messiah was to do: but the *parchments* contain an account of his having appeared, and of what he had done. And as John, who pointed to Christ's person, *was the greatest prophet that ever was born of woman*; and as the least subject in the kingdom of God, after the day of Pentecost, was greater than John; it is plain that

that the ministry of the Spirit is greater than that of the law; Jesus is greater than Moses; things accomplished greater than things predicted; sealing up vision and prophecy better than things foretold; the things provided for us better than the things of the old testament; faithfulness and truth in fulfilling greater than truth alone promising; and, of course, the *parchments* are more excellent than the *books*.

5thly. The false apostles had laboured hard to undermine Paul's reputation, to supplant him, and alienate the affections of the saints from him; in order to which they come to them *with excellency of speech, great swelling words of vanity, alluring through the lusts of the flesh, and much wantonness; and had crept into houses, and led captive silly women; yea, though they hated Christ, his gospel, Paul, and the whole gospel church, yet they had preached Christ out of envy, and in pretence, on purpose to add affliction to the apostle's bonds, that, while he was a prisoner confined in chains, they were labouring to pervert both the gospel and the professors of it.*

Paul had before this confronted them. *I will come unto you shortly, and will know, not the speech of them that are puffed up, but the power; for the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power. I will know the divine power and energy of God upon their souls, their mission, and commission, from Christ; what power they have with God in prayer, and what spiritual seals they have got to their ministry. Thus Paul, and the church in his day, are commended of*



Christ. *Thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars; and for my name sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted, &c.*

The apostle having thus confronted and confuted these ministers of Satan, they were obliged to adopt another method of craftiness, and that was to *forge epistles*, and send them to the churches, as if they came from Paul. Paul soon detects this cheat, and sends the watch-word abroad. *Now I beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter, as from us, that the day of Christ is at hand; let no man deceive you by any means.*

2 Theff. ii. 2. And, to prevent destruction by this snare of the devil, he signs every epistle with his own hand-writing in future. *The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write.* 2 Theff. iii. 17. The sure token in every epistle was his own hand; so he wrote, and all that wanted his signature was counterfeit, or spurious.

His manner of writing appears to me to be this. He drew the matter from his great Master by humble prayer, and under the influence of the Holy Spirit he wrote it down; and these were copied by Timothy, Epaphroditus, Tychicus, Titus, Lucas, and others; and exact copies of them all were written by Luke, to prevent all counterfeits by Satan and his apostles; in order that the *parchments* might be handed down to the churches in future ages, neat, pure, untainted,

untainted, and unadulterated, *as the unsearchable riches of Christ*, left by will to the churches, that they might flow from our great Aaron's beard to the skirts of his clothing, until the top-stone of mercy's fabric be brought forth with shoutings, crying, *Grace, grace unto it.*

And now, as the apostle had long had a proof of the fidelity of Timothy, and of the *unfeigned faith of him*, and of his mother Eunice, and of his grandmother Lois, and having no fellow-labourer like minded, who would naturally care for the state of the church, he charges him *to use all diligence to come to him quickly*, fearing he should die before he came; that he might appoint him the executor of this his last will and testament, that he might be enabled, being both an eye and an ear-witness to the bequest of the apostle's whole effects, to detect, and to disprove any forgery that should ever after appear in the apostle's name in the world, or among the churches of Christ; and likewise that Timothy should deliver the same, by copies, to all the churches, and at the same time keep an exact copy of all the *parchments* in his own study, and, among the rest, that which contains his own charge, *that he himself might preach no other doctrine.* *This charge I commit to thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience, which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck, of whom is Hymeneus and Alexander,*

*ander, whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme; which leads me*

IV. To some improvement of the subject to the present occasion. Some will say, What has Paul's death, his last will and testament, and his *books and parchments*, to do with the present state of our nation, the war that we are involved in, the hardness of the present times, and with our present appointed fast? Answer. If neither the *books* nor the *parchments* grant any warrant to any appointed fasting and prayer, we can have no expectation either of being regarded, heard, or answered, in our prayers put up on the present occasion; for, if no such warrant be granted, nor any such indulgence be allowed, either in the *books* or the *parchments*, where are we to find any encouragement to use our interest with God on such an occasion as this?

However, we are not at a loss either for precedents or promises in times of calamity. *Call upon me in time of trouble, saith the Lord, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.* The kings of Israel often proclaimed a fast, and called upon the subjects of their realm to use their interest with the God of heaven in behalf of their own families, their own country, the worship of their God, and for the protection and safety of their sovereign.

Moab, Ammon, and the Edomites, combine against Israel under the reign of Jehoshaphat; Jehoshaphat proclaims a fast, and seeks God by prayer; Judah, out of all his cities, unites with him, and seeks the



the Lord also; and the Lord was found of them. He informed them by a prophet that they need not fight in that battle; the God of armies would win that field, and their work should be first to praise the beauties of holiness, and then to divide the spoil.

When God blesses a nation with his *everlasting gospel*, he reinforces that nation with an additional army. All nations have some soldiers, and every believer *is a good soldier of Christ Jesus*. The church *is an army with banners*, as well as the troops in the field; and sometimes a formidable host has been destroyed by prayer, when they could not attack them in their ranks; prayer is one part of the armour that equips the christian. Pharaoh and all his host is destroyed, at the cry of Moses, by the red sea, and in a way not very common, Israel was saved by flying, and Pharaoh was destroyed by pursuing.

Notwithstanding the abounding wickedness of this nation, and the awful spread of damnable heresies in it, I believe in my conscience that God hath more monuments of mercy, and subjects of his special grace, in Great Britain, than he hath in all the world besides. No small number lie in the compass of my own knowledge, both in town and country, who know God for themselves, who have felt his power, and found access to him, and who are sound in spirit, practice, and principle.

Moreover, God, in times of public calamity, often condescends to go, even with an ignorant people,

as far as the light of nature can guide them to go after him. This may be seen in the matter of Nineveh. Jonah proclaims its overthrow in the public streets; and, having sounded the awful alarm, the whole city was roused; and, though no Mediator was set before them, nor spirit of supplication promised to them; and though they had nothing but a peradventure, *Ah, who can tell?* to rest on; yet they put away the evil of their hands, fast, sit in sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; and God repents of the evil, according to his own declaration. *At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them: and at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it, if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good wherewith I said I would benefit them.* Jer. xviii. 7, 8, 9, 10.

Of all the human race, we are the greatest debtors both to providence and grace; for, while God's judgments have been so conspicuously abroad in the earth, we have sat unmolested under our own vine, and under our own fig-tree. And who can take notice of the destruction of that *great family* whose ancestors have brought so many of Christ's sheep to the slaughter, and not see the hand of God in all this? *I will visit the sins of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that*  
*hate*

*bate me.* Perhaps all the annals of time will not produce a period when so many have been numbered to the sword, as in this war; and who can look, and not see that the slaughter hath been chiefly among the children of that *great whore*, who has been so long *drunk with the blood of the saints*? God's promise to her is, *I will cast her into a bed, and they that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent; and I will kill her children with death.*

And, *as the Lord God of recompences will surely requite, and avenge the blood of his servants*, I take this to be the principal reason for his not suffering any power to ward off the blow on the continent; though his good hand hath been visibly seen with our fleets in the protecting our own country. Britain appears to be one of *the isles that should wait for his law*, and hath been long favoured with it; and hitherto truth hath been *our shield and buckler*.

What astonishes me above measure is to find so many in England who have their affections so alienated from their own country as to have their hearts and souls in the interest of our common enemy. He that hates the place of his nativity is unworthy of a residence in it, and he that betrays it is a first cousin to Judas. Ephraim acted this strange part; he cast off the royal family of David, and then gathers his affections both from Judah and Benjamin; and in the end Asher is found to be confederate with him. *And he helped the children of Lot.*



*Lot.* The Almighty is so exasperated at this, that he will not allow him the common age of man; *Within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken, that it be not a people.* Isaiah vii. 8. Another prophet lives to see his glass almost run out, and his long captivity coming on. *Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the people; Ephraim is a cake not turned; strangers have devoured his strength, yet he knoweth it not; yea, grey hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth it not.* Hosea vii. 8, 9.

His Assyrian confederate soon leads him into captivity; and to the promised land he is not returned yet, though it is above two thousand years since he left it.

The present time is one of the times of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be delivered out of it. It is a time of universal, and, I was going to say, of unparalleled oppression. The staff of life seems to be locked up in the hands of three classes of creatures, the monopolist, the rich overgrown farmer, and the mealman. You may call the first the *bupper*, and the other two the *upper and nether millstone*; and with this treble engine of mischief the devil at this day grinds the faces of the poor of this nation. I am acquainted with many farmers in various parts of the nation, men of truth and religion; and I am fully persuaded, by what I have seen and heard, that there is just as great a scarcity in England as there was in Egypt during the seven years plenty.

The conscientious farmer that will sell, and the little

little one, and the poor farmer that must sell, are attended in every market by the monopolist. The rich overgrown farmer, and those *that neither fear God nor regard man*, will not sell; *they withhold the corn, that the people may curse them*. The meal-man, when he gets it, if report be true (and the bread we eat daily proves it), gives you a mixture either of beans, oats, barley, peas, or rye. This is whispered abroad by some that work in the mill, and has been told in London by those that drive the cart; and thus you pay eighteen or twenty shillings per bushel for hog-corn. *But will not God visit for these things, and shall not his soul be avenged on such oppressors as these?* He will visit these men sooner or later, for he has cursed them in the books, and damned them in the parchments.

Last summer, just before harvest, a gentleman of the county of Suffex, foreseeing, by all appearance, a terrible famine coming on, turned his thoughts to various things, in order to prevent *this evil arrow*. He set to work to make bread of rye and wheat; he ate it himself, and brought it to a large town where I have much acquaintance, and there recommended it even to gentlemen. Some approved, some not; however most viewed it a good make-shift, and concluded that every one would eat it rather than *starve in the streets*. When harvest came in, and the new corn began to come to market, this same gentleman was found to have five loads of old wheat by him, which at that time, I believe,

belive, would have fetched forty pounds per load; but this price *was naught, it was naught with the seller*. Thus he lent his friendly aid to help forward the calamity of an artifiical famine; and, having assisted in procuring the disease, he set his mind to work to find out the remedy; and by his last deed this *lord of the gentiles was called a benefactor*.

Yesterday a poor God-fearing man called on me, named Coston, from Wooking in Surry. He is own brother to one of the six students who some years ago went to America. He has worked at husbandry, at various places about the country, for years, and hath a wife and five children. I asked him if there was the least appearance of a scarcity in any one part of the land he had been in? He said, No, not in any one thing. I asked him what flour was at per bushel with him? He said the worst sort of all was eighteen shillings; but he informed me that he had left off eating any thing made of wheat for this eight months, and bought nothing but barley. I asked him what they might charge him for that? He replied, Last week I gave nine shillings per bushel, and it was wretched stuff; but Mr. Hodd told me it would be ten shillings next week.

These are the grateful returns which are made *to the Father of all mercies, and God of all comfort*, for one of the most plentiful crops of barley that ever clothed the hills or valleys of Great Britain. God sends a plenty, and men make a famine; and so the ears of the Lord God of sabaoth are perpetually



petually filled with the cries of the Egyptians for bread. But where is Joseph, where is Zaphnath-paaneah, the Revealer of secrets and the Saviour of the land? The heir of all things is at the right hand of God; send your prayers there in this matter; you are encouraged both by the *books* and the *parchments*.

An oppressor is a character that is excluded the glorious visions of heaven. *He that shall dwell on high, and see the king in his beauty, and the land that is very far off, is one that despiseth the gain of oppression, and that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes.* Isaiah xxxiii. 14, 15, 16, 17. This is the language of the *books*; and the *parchments* tell you to let your requests be made known unto God, and you shall never pray in vain; for thus saith the *books*, *For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord; I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him.* Psalm xii. 5.

Your perpetual prayers will hasten the coming and kingdom of the great MESSIAH; and the first work that shall ever be performed at his appearing shall be to avenge the poor and needy, by an entire destruction of this engine of the devil called OPPRESSION; and by this hospitable act the King of Zion will spread his fame from pole to pole, when all the inhabitants of the terraqueous globe will welcome his reign, bless his appearance, and hail their great Deliverer; for so saith the *books*; *He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the*  
D *needy,*

needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor. They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations. In his days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace so long as the moon endures. His name shall endure for ever; his name shall be continued as long as the sun, and men shall be blessed in him. All nations shall call him blessed. Psalm lxxii.

Some, under this infernal yoke of oppression, under this artificial famine, let fly the anguish of their souls in open rebellion against the higher powers. This is adding sin to sin; this rebellion is strictly forbidden by the books, and condemned by the parchments.

This satanic art of oppression was carried on under the government of one of the best of kings that ever lived, and under one of the wisest that ever reigned. David and Solomon both complain of it; and, though they were both despotic princes, yet neither of them could destroy it. In David's days the devil had a privy council of these engineers. Their eyes stand out with fatness; they have more than heart could wish; they are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression; they speak hostility; they set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth; therefore his people return bitter; and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them. Psalm lxxiii. 7, 8, 9, 10. If you would know what is meant by waters of a full cup in the books, you will find it explained in the parchments. But they that

that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil. 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10.

Solomon complains of this sin, of this evident token of perdition. So I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun; and, behold, the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressor there was power, but they had no comforter; wherefore I praised the dead more than the living. Ecc. iv, 12. The oppressed here is in the same state of the oppressor; that is, destitute of the grace of God; neither of them had a comforter; the first had leanness in his soul, and the latter leanness in both soul and body; and so it was the poor oppressing the poor, which is a sweeping rain that leaves no food behind.

But, blessed be God, this is not our case; for God hath put gladness in our hearts, which is of a better nature than that which springs from an increase of corn and wine. Psalm iv. 7.

It was the cry that Israel put up under this yoke that brought the God of Abraham from the third heaven into the bush. Now therefore behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me; and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt. Ex. iii. 9, 10. And what did they get by this their oppression? Why, they got



ten of the heaviest plagues that ever fell upon a nation ; the destruction of their first-born, the spoiling and ruin of their country, and the overthrow of Pharaoh and all his host in the red sea.

When God intends that a man shall fill up the measure of his iniquity in haste, he generally gives him up to *his own heart's lust* ; and then his eye and heart are never satisfied. Thus he gave up Pharaoh, thus he gave up Nabal, and those also that *beat his people in pieces, and grind the faces of the poor.* Isajah iii. xv. And those whose souls were plotting fresh schemes of oppression, while they were engaged in the very service of God. *And the songs of the temple shall be howling in that day, saith the Lord God : there shall be many dead bodies in every place, they shall cast them forth with silence.* Hear this, O ye that swallow up the poor and needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail, saying, *When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn ? And the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit ? That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes ; yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat ?* The Lord hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, *Surely I will never forget any of their works.* Amos viii. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. To give a man up to this insatiation is one of the worst judgments from God that is to be found in the land of hope. *For he shall have judgment without mercy that hath shewed no mercy, and mercy rescueth against judgment.*

Those

Those at the helm of affairs have struggled to undermine this soul-damning sin; but many of the *landholders*, it is to be feared, have their eyes upon raising the rent of their farms, and therefore will not be very forward to make head against an evil that brings grist to their mill.

*The rich man's wealth is his strong city, and a high wall in his own conceit, saith Solomon.* But he adds, *A wise man scaleth the city of the mighty, and casteth down the strength of the confidence thereof.* This is done by prayer; for there is no wall, no bulwark, no human oppressor, no, nor even the council of devils, that are proof against the prayer of faith. *Call upon me in the time of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.* This is the language of the books; and the parchments say the same. *All things are possible to them that believe.*

Those that are rebelling against the higher powers imagine that it is in the power of their hand to de-  
*stroy this root of all evil, and to break in pieces the oppressor.* But this is work that none but the King of kings can do, and which he hath promised to do: but the oppressed must cry and pray for it. *Call upon me, and I will deliver thee. But thou shalt not revile the gods, nor speak evil of the ruler of thy people. By me kings reign, and princes decree justice; by me princes rule, and nobles, yea, all the judges of the earth.* This is revealed in the books, and so it is in the parchments. *There is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God; he that resisteth the power*

*power resisteth the ordinance of God, and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.* We have got a set of men in the nation that want to blow up all our walls and bulwarks, and to make Great Britain a *field of blood*. And what have they done? Why, just nothing. And what is the cause? The cause is, the will of God; he would not have it so. Then have they not resisted his will? and have they not resisted the power? Yes, they have; and such are rebels by the *books*, and they are damned by the *parchments*.

*Fear God, and honour the king*, is the command of God to all his children. The government that we are under protects us in the worship of our God, and will not suffer us to be molested by any; and this is a blessing to us. We have no call to be afraid of the power while we do that which is good, for such shall have praise of the same; for rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Rom. xiii. 3. Rebelling against God, resisting his will and ordinance, and speaking evil of dignitaries, shall never bring prosperity to the land, nor comfort to conscience; this may be proved both from the *books* and the *parchments*.

This is a day appointed for fasting and prayer; and may God grant that we may be thankful for our high privileges, and for the hopes that he hath given us of the great inheritance, and that we may seek the welfare both of king and country, and that we may all unite in our prayers to God, and that daily, that he would be pleased to remember the *poor and needy*



ready according to his promise, and that he would for Christ's sake break in pieces the oppressor.

I was informed last night of a certain farmer, not seventy miles from London, that hath now by him seventy-five loads of wheat, which at this time would fetch, I suppose, near 2000*l*. But is any thing too hard for the Lord? He says, *The corn, the wine, the oil, the wool, and the flax, are mine: I know all the fowls of the mountains; the beasts of the field are mine, all the cattle of the forest are mine, and so are the flocks upon a thousand hills.* To God then let your request be made known; this is our door of hope in this valley of Achor; call daily upon him to remember the cry of the humble, and not forget the oppressor; and then add watchfulness to prayer, and you shall not long engage in this work before you shall see both the fruits and effects of it; and, by the good hand of my God upon me, I will meet you daily at the throne of grace upon this business. To this we are encouraged by the books. *I will bear, I will bear (saith the Lord) the heavens, and they shall bear the earth; and the earth shall bear the corn, the wine, and the oil; and they shall bear Jerezeel.*

Seek the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you; and pray your heavenly Father daily for daily bread, and do it earnestly, in secret, and he that seeth in secret shall reward you openly; and this is promised in the parables.

Be earnest in it. Men ought always to pray and

not to faint. And be importunate; in due time ye shall reap if ye faint not. May the good Spirit help your infirmities, and the great Advocate plead your cause; and may the Father of all mercies hear your prayers, and answer them agreeable to his own promise in Christ Jesus, (which is revealed both in the books and the parchments) and that to the glory of his own name, and to your present and eternal welfare. Amen, and Amen.

THE END.

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